

# 'BODGER' SEALS NARROW WIN OVER HENDON

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By MICHAEL KNOX: Hendon 1, Wycombe Wanderers 2

IN recent years, an away win over Hendon would have sent Wycombe Wanderers' supporters into ecstasies. But Tuesday night's unconvincing 2-1 success at Claremont Road in Division One of the Rothmans Isthmian League brought none of that excitement.

The reason, of course, is that Hendon are not the team they were last season, when they held the formidable Newcastle United to a draw in an F.A. Cup tie at St. James's Park. Indeed only one member of that side is now with the North London Club.

Skipper Rod Haider is that solitary player and on Tuesday night, in my opinion, he was the star of the match and had he been playing alongside some of his former colleagues, Wycombe would have been hard pressed to have collected one point, let alone three.

But all the others have left for greener pastures, and they were replaced by an enthusiastic bunch of relatively inexperienced performers, who nevertheless made an off-colour Wycombe side fight all the way for victory.

I say 'off-colour' because apart from one brief spell in the second half, Wycombe were far from convincing. Passes went astray and the marking was often slack. They will have to tighten up in mid-field if they are to stay in the hunt for the championship.

## REARDON OUT

Blues undoubtedly missed the services of their experienced mid-field man Terry Reardon, who injured a knee in Saturday's 2-2 draw at Sutton. His ability to slow down the tempo of a game was sorely lacking, and thus it was Haider, who dominated this vital department of play.

Graham Mackenzie, who came in for Reardon, was seen to good effect in only occasional flurries. He flitted in and out of the game like the proverbial butterfly, without ever imposing himself on the opposition.

Alongside him, Howard Kennedy, apart from one flashing shot just before half-time which brought him a goal, had a disappointing game. He too, was totally anonymous for long periods and it was left to the dynamic Micky Holfield to carry out the donkey work in mid-field.

Quite often Wycombe missed out the mid-field completely. High balls were pumped out of

defence for the front-running trio of Keith Searle, Tony Horseman and Steve Perrin who therefore had to work twice as hard as they should have had to. Not only did they have to build up attacks but they had to finish them off as well.

The Wanderers' defence was given one of its sternest tests so far this season. In the West Indian Eddie James, Hendon possessed a two-fold danger. Not only could he win the ball in the air but he was able to beat his opponents on the ground.

The nippy Roy Davies and Johnny Wilson also posed problems, especially to left-back Dave Bullock, who again looked a little too slow to cover the right flank. However his heading ability was useful on more than one occasion.

In spite of the deficiencies I have mentioned, Wycombe still won the match to take their points tally to 10 out of 12, which cannot be bad for a side playing below its best. There were however a number of

bright performances for the visitors, particularly right-back Paul Birdseye, who seems to improve with every game and Keith Mead.

Wycombe just about deserved to take the points although few would have quibbled with the fairness of a draw. The home side clearly had the better of the first half, but strangely found themselves a goal down at the interval.

Hendon made a brisk start forcing a corner in the first minute. Wycombe hearts fluttered a little when John Maskell fumbled Dave Poole's flighted kick, but referee Mr. Bray's whistle went for a foul on the 'keeper.

## PHILLIPS JEERED

Wycombe skipper Alan Phillips, who is one of the Hendon exiles not unnaturally was jeered by home supporters whenever he touched the ball, and they cheered even louder when Bobby Southam once beat him in the air before

shooting wide.

Haider, as usual, was at the centre of things and it was he who created the first chance of the match in the 10th minute. Accelerating into the penalty area, Haider slipped the ball to Wilson, whose shot went dangerously across the face of the goal.

Wanderers had to wait until the 23rd minute before forcing their first corner — and it nearly produced a goal. Holfield's cross was palmed out to Bullock, standing on the six yard line. The big defender, in attempting to lob the ball over the 'keeper, succeeded only in ballooning it over the bar.

The other end of the field also produced its moments of excitement, notably when Southam's goalward shot was blocked Birdseye after Maskell had been drawn well out of his goal by Steve Jeffries. Hendon's lack of a dangerous finisher certainly let them down here.

With half-time approaching both sides seemed content to

enter the dressing rooms on level terms. But three minutes before half-time — just the right psychological moment so the experts say — Wycombe snatched the lead.

Horseman took a corner on the right and John Field appeared to have cleared the danger when he headed to the edge of the penalty area. But it went straight to Kennedy, who lashed a shot through a posse of defenders and past the surprised Arthur Paisley in goal.

Wycombe started the second half as though they would race away with the match. Perrin was only inches away with a near post flick following a throw-in, while only a desperate clearance by Micky Cooper prevented Holfield scoring with a header, from Horseman's well-taken corner.

In the 55th minute Hendon equalised against the run of play. After a delightful move downfield, the home side had split open Wycombe's defence and Jeffries timed his run perfectly to send Haider's pass over the outstretched hands of Maskell and into the net via the underside of the bar.

This stirred Wycombe into action and in the next five minutes, they went close to scoring three times. Dave Poole and Brian Stevens, between them thwarted Horseman, as 'Bodger' threatened to break clear, Mead fired a shot inches over the top, and Perrin crashed the ball against a post with a superb half-volley shot, when at full stretch.

One man who was not involved in the action was Keith Searle and he was replaced on the hour by the speedy Dylan Evans. The pace of the match for the previous 15 minutes had been terrific and it was understandable that both sides now decided to take a breather.

Perhaps Hendon relaxed a little too much, for in the 74th minute, they seemed to be standing like statues when Horseman scored the winner. Put clear by Perrin, 'Bodger' kept his cool and slipped the ball over the approaching Paisley and into the net.

There remained only one further moment of danger for Wycombe. Two minutes after the goal, Wilson curled a lovely cross into the goalmouth, where Haider vollied the ball well over the bar. So Wycombe collected another three points, and once a few problems are ironed out they should once again be up among the leaders at the end of the season.

**HENDON:** A. Paisley; D. Poole, M. Cooper, J. Field, B. Stevens, R. Haider, S. Jeffries, J. Wilson, R. Davies, R. Southam, E. James. Sub: V. Cogger (not used).

**WYCOMBE:** J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, D. Bullock, K. Mead, A. Phillips, G. Mackenzie, A. Horseman, H. Kennedy, K. Searle (Sub: D. Evans 60 mins.), M. Holfield, S. Perrin.

**Referee:** K. Bray.  
**Scorers —** Hendon: Jeffries (55 mins.); Wycombe: Kennedy (42), Horseman (74).